

Major League Club Owners in Quest of a Manager Usually Turn to a Former Wearer of the Catcher's Mask or a Pitcher

BATTERY MEN MAKE EXCELLENT LEADERS

Most Successful Major League Managers Started Career as Catchers.

FIVE ARE NOW IN CHARGE

Robinson, Moran, Mitchell, Stallings and Rickey Were Backstops.

By FREDERICK G. LINS.

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Why is it that when a club owner selects a baseball manager nowadays he generally selects a man who in his playing days was a battery man? The drift in recent years has been from the playing manager, until there is not a single one in the game today. And in selecting new managers the drift is unquestionably toward former battery men, particularly former catchers.

Of the sixteen major league managers ten were battery men when they played, seven were catchers and three pitchers. The National League especially is strong for catching managers. Five of the leaders for 1919 in the parent league donned the big mitt and bird cage in their younger days—Wilbert Robinson of the Brooklyn, Pat Moran of the Cincinnati Reds, Fred Mitchell of the Chicago Cubs, George Stallings of the Boston Braves and Branch Rickey of the St. Louis Cardinals. Then Jack Coombs, the new manager of the Phillies, is one of the pitching stars developed during this generation.

In the American League, Connie Mack of the Athletics and Lee Fohl of the Cleveland Indians formerly were catchers, while Clark Griffith of the Washington Senators and Ed Barrow of the Boston Red Sox are former pitchers. Barrow, however, only pitched as an amateur. Throughout his professional baseball career he has been employed as a manager.

Oddly enough few of the men named were stars during their playing days. Wilbert Robinson, Jack Coombs and Clark Griffith were the best players of the lot. Robble was a splendid catcher in his day. He always was a good target for pitchers to fire at. He also was a dangerous hitter while backstopping for the old Baltimore Orioles, and holds a record of seven consecutive hits in a nine inning game.

Coombs a Great Pitcher.

Coombs' work is recent enough for all fans to be well acquainted with it. Coombs, Bender and Plank of the old Athletics formed the nucleus of one of the greatest pitching staffs the game ever has known. During his career in Philadelphia Coombs helped Mack win pennants and world's championships, and held up records which any pitcher should be proud of.

In 1906, when Jack was a youth just out of college, he won a famous 24 inning game from the Red Sox. He never lost a world's series game, though he has appeared in three series. In 1910 he won three of the four games the Athletics won from the Cubs, winning the second and third games in succession. The same year he set up an American League record of 13 shutouts, but this record since has been broken by Alexander in the National League, when he piled up 16 shutouts in 1918.

After recovering from a serious illness, Coombs made a great comeback with the Brooklyn in 1915. He won ten straight games from the Giants before they tripped him up.

Clark Griffith was a mighty clever pitcher with the old Chicago Nationals before jumping to the American League in 1901, though "Griff" continued to do good work for both the White Sox and Yankees. Griffith had a high batting average, a strong, wiry frame, and had quite a good fast ball as well as a sharp-breaking curve.

Of the rest Connie Mack was about the best though Mack never could hit well enough to be termed a star. He caught for Buffalo and Washington when those clubs were in the National League and later on put in quite a term with the old Pirates. Mack never had much of a batting average, but could hit pretty well in the pinch. During his stay in Washington he caught old Hank O'Day, the National League umpire.

Scribe Ridiculed Connie Mack.

Though Mack was a smart catcher in his playing days, it is interesting to note that critics of the '90s did not always think so. A veteran scribe recently got quite a number of laughs by digging up a lot of notes of a quarter of a century ago. One of them referred very sarcastically to Connie. It read: "Manager Buckenberger of the Pirates says he will retain Mack, his lean catcher, in the hopes that some day he can make a thinking ball player out of him."

Mack remained in Pittsburgh long enough to succeed Buckenberger as manager. They still tell some of the "inside" tricks Connie used to attempt in Pittsburgh. Once he locked a lot of balls into the pitcher's box, and when the pitcher cracked the ball, the balls were there, with no life to them. Connie arranged to have the other team to bat against the balls, and when the pitcher cracked the ball, the balls were there, with no life to them. Connie arranged to have the other team to bat against the balls, and when the pitcher cracked the ball, the balls were there, with no life to them.

Pat Moran stuck quite a spell in the National League as a catcher. Though Pat was a good reliable man, he never was a star. He was second catcher on the Cubs during their days of glory in the Smokey City. Kling did practically all the catching on Chance's old championship, and when he began to slip Jimmy Archer came in.

Lee Fohl, Manager of Cleveland Club, Spent Little Time as Major Leaguer

Then Lee Fohl, manager of the Cleveland club, was not even a big league catcher. He was up with Pittsburgh once, but only long enough to get a couple of meals in the Smokey City. Practically his entire playing career was spent in the minor leagues. One naturally comes to ask how these managers came into prominence when they showed only fair ability as ball players. In other words, what was the distinction between them and other fair players, who came up, and in the big leagues for a few years and then drop out of sight.

For one thing, most of the ex-battery managers in the game today have made reputations as coaches of pitchers, and the ability to develop a capable pitching corps annually is assuming greater importance in baseball.

"Give me the man who can stop them making runs. We'll look after the scoring," is getting to be the regular cry of baseball managers.

No one ever thought of Moose Mitchell as a manager until he performed such wonders with the Boston Nationals, and a chronic tallent team won the world's championship. Robinson also came to the front as a developer of pitchers. He took over such men as Marquard and Tarsous on the Giants when they were crude material and made real pitchers of them.

Major League Leaders Who Were Prominent Catchers or Pitchers Before Assuming Role of Manager.



Kling usually caught 125 games a year and did all the world's series catching.

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Fred Mitchell, president-manager of the Cubs, was just a mediocre player, though he tried both ends of the battery game. Mitchell was a pitcher for the Philadelphia Athletics in 1902, when Mack brought the first American League pennant to that city, but "Mitch" whose right name is Yarn, was just a fair performer. The next season he was released by Mack and signed with the Phillies. Later he drifted to Brooklyn, where he pitched for the National League in 1906.

His arm had gone back on him and in the minors he shifted from pitcher to catcher. When Stallings came to the Athletics he brought Mitchell along with him as extra catcher. Even then Fred had a reputation for his ability to develop pitchers. Accidents to Sweeney and Crighter the famous Giant-Yankee city series of 1910 made it necessary for Mitchell to catch most of the series.

Chase was manager of the club next season and let Mitchell go. He returned to the minors, and when Stallings was made manager of the Braves in 1913 he took Mitchell with him as coach. "Mitch" has been a credit for being the brains behind the Braves in their great victory in 1914, when the Braves defeated the supposedly invincible Athletics in the world's series in four straight games, the only world's series victory won by the National League in the last nine years.

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SHEPPARD BECOMES COMMUNITY LEADER

'Peerless' Mel Takes Up New Athletic Duties in Chester, Pa.

PHILADELPHIA, April 5.—"Mel" Sheppard, Philadelphia's international champion runner, known everywhere as "Peerless" Mel, has commenced work as director of the new department of athletics and physical education in "Community Service for Chester and Vicinity." His headquarters will be in the Crozer Building, Chester, as a member of the executive staff representing the Community Service organization of which Gov. William C. Sproul is chairman.

Already the boys and young men of Chester are enthusiastic over the leadership they are to have from a Philadelphia man who won his laurels in three international Olympics and in numerous athletic contests throughout the world. When introduced last night to the five young fellows who are members of Chester's pioneer community club "Mel" Sheppard got a taste of the enthusiastic reception which industrial workers, high school students, young business men and women, the playground association, public school authorities and the general community are preparing to give the new athletic leader as rapidly as he can take up the various departments of his new community service.

Brooklyn A. A. Road Race. The Brooklyn Athletic Association will stage an open four and a half mile hand-pole invitation road race next Sunday afternoon from its clubhouse on Avenue A, near a new course. Louis Kaufman of the Bronx is the junior cross-country champion, will compete.

Stars in Postal Meet. National and Local Champions Will Compete. Many of the champion athletes who were not lucky enough to get into the National Indoor Championships are on deck today in the Postal Athletic Meet, which will be held at the United States Post Office on Saturday evening, April 12. Close to 400 entries have been filed for this meet, which will be held in the afternoon and evening sessions. The Postal Athletic Meet is a representative one, and the National and Local champions will be seen in action.

Water Polo at Rutgers. NEW BRUNSWICK, N. J., April 5.—Water polo is to be added to the list of Rutgers water sports next winter, according to Coach Jim Bell. Rutgers is a V. A. C. star. The Scarlet's performance in the water this year were sensational, and Coach Bell believes that they are ready to branch out.

Ball Players No Longer Looked Upon as 'Plague Patients' by Hotel Keepers

Old time fans always will give one an argument as to whether baseball is any faster now than it was in the halcyon days of "Pop" Anson and "King" Kelly.

The silver temple brigade finds it mighty hard to admit that Ty Cobb has anything on some of the stars of yesterday. But there is one point on which the veteran patrons and players concede something to the present generation. They admit that baseball managers of the field are better now than they were once.

There used to be a time when managers of first class hotels would have welcomed a proposition to house big league ball clubs just as much as they would have rejoiced in the chance to entertain a flock of plague patients. The very idea filled them with horror, for the players were likely to do almost anything except burn the house down.

All the old time ball players were not tough. In fact, the large majority behaved as well as anybody could ask. But there was a fair percentage of polite fellows who never were intended for polite society. The "bad actors" were allowed about all the rope they cared to take, for the better element figured that every man's conduct was his own business.

Nowadays rowdiness of the field has virtually been eliminated. Now and then some individual kicks over the traces, but the spirit of the managers and clubs is against anything smacking of "rough stuff" and those who want to cut up seek some place where their base and their comrades will not find them.

SISLER IS BETTER PLAYER THAN RUTH

So Declares Branch Rickey in Discussing Ability of Famous First Baseman.

IS A HIGH CLASS PITCHER

Says St. Louis "Phenom" Is a Better Fielder and Base Runner Than Babe.

In an epoch of tottering thrones, Babe Ruth, all around monarch of the diamond, would better be looking after the props of his empire. For—have we the word of President Branch Rickey of the Cardinals for this—in St. Louis there is one player who can depend on the position manager and himself assume the title of "most versatile player in the game" with just a little encouragement.

This player, Rickey avers, can outstep, outrun and outthink Ruth; he can fill more positions than Babe and play any or all of them better. He has more aggressiveness, more daring, more everything in short, save money and reputation. This player is not a member of Rickey's squad, just to prove that his opinion is not more clever press agency. The only reason this player has not utterly eclipsed Ruth in fame, popularity and salary is that he is a victim of poor exploitation and too great personal modesty.

Sisler—that's the fellow Rickey has in mind. Sisler, a soft spoken fighter, a velvet pawed tiger when roused, a player whose powers of concentration, according to Rickey, enable him to fill not acceptably but in a masterly style any position assigned to him.

In an interview Rickey explained his optimism regarding Sisler's future. Rickey has the right to discuss Sisler because he discovered him as a college star at Michigan University, jockeyed him out of the possession of Barney Dreyfuss into the hands of the St. Louis Browns and then gave him his first big league instruction.

Ruth Properly Advertised.

"Babe Ruth fills the public eye," Rickey said, "because not only is he a great pitcher and hitter, but because the fullest use has been made of him to advertise his strength in these two departments. He has been in the world's championship form and clout a home run over the fence; he can clean the bases in a pinch; and can bring his heavy artillery into daily play, by handling a first base or outfield position acceptably."

"In this respect he, however, does not compare with Sisler. Sisler is as great a pitcher and hitter as Ruth, but he has shown me his quality in the games in which I employed him—look back at his record if you don't believe this. As a batter and all around player I leave to the records to set forth his ability as compared with that of Babe."

"He batted .347 last year to Ruth's .27; he led the league in stealing bases with forty in an abbreviated season, distancing Cobb and the other stars; he was the fourth first baseman in fielding percentage; as an outfielder he showed wonderful promise; his great ground covering ability, fine throwing arm and daring would make him a star at any position where Ruth would be merely a defensive filler, tolerated because of his hitting. Save for the pitching, his superiority to Ruth can't be disputed, and I myself am certain that he is Babe's pitching master."

Sisler Needs Press Agent.

"Why is it that Ruth is so much more prominent than Sisler? The answer is that Sisler has not been exploited to 50 per cent. of his publicity value and not to more than 70 per cent. of his playing efficiency, while Ruth has been used on every possible occasion."

"The crowd's immediate need of a first baseman compelled us to use Sisler there. He made so good that other virtues were forgotten. The manager of the Browns is seen to be satisfied with a top notch performance at first base and a wonderful hitting and running ability."

"To this is a lamentable mistake. Sisler could pitch in turn and pitch the best left hand ball in the league. With the same team back of him he would win an often or more often than Ruth. On other days he could return to first base or the outfield and do better than Ruth, all that that player now does to evoke the wonder and plaudits of the masses."

"Sisler to me stands for an opportunity going to waste—opportunity both for the club and for the player. The manager is losing a chance to increase receipts by utilizing another bleacher favorite—a player whose versatility and ability transcends that even of the 'Flying Dutchman' Hans Wagner, in his palmy days."

Stars in Postal Meet.

National and Local Champions Will Compete. Many of the champion athletes who were not lucky enough to get into the National Indoor Championships are on deck today in the Postal Athletic Meet, which will be held at the United States Post Office on Saturday evening, April 12. Close to 400 entries have been filed for this meet, which will be held in the afternoon and evening sessions. The Postal Athletic Meet is a representative one, and the National and Local champions will be seen in action.

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SOMETIMES 'RUBES' STING 'WISE ONES'

Such Was Case When Stecher Threw Outliner on Mat in Omaha in 1915.

CHICAGOANS BIG LOSERS

Even Frank Gotch and Strangler Lewis Found They Had "Played" Wrong Man.

Although the States of Iowa and Nebraska oftentimes have proved the happy hunting ground for professional sporting sharpers, sometimes the worm has turned and the "wise guys" have been the victims of a killing. This was the case when Joe Stecher, throw Albert Cutler of Chicago in Omaha July 4, 1915.

Even Frank Gotch and his manager, Ed Clark, were sure, not to mention Dr. Rolter, who telegraphed \$500 to Stecher, that the Chicagoans were so eager to get their money placed that they were on the verge of fighting with one another when some corn husker who was willing to bet on Stecher was found.

Stecher is the type of athlete who rose from obscurity into the spotlight in less than six months. He is naturally strong and has powerful legs. The easy manner in which he disposed of good trial horses made him a worthy opponent for Cutler in the eyes of the natives, but not so with the close followers of wrestling who had seen him in action.

Send Money Ahead.

After Stecher was matched with Cutler the news of how easy it would be to make a killing on the mat was flashed to Chicago. The Windy City fraternity immediately got busy. The best grapplers available were induced to wrestle with Cutler to prepare him for the match. Commissioners were dispatched to Omaha with Chicago money which was wagered on the short end of 10 to 1 odds.

Smiley Corbett, the well known Chicago sporting man, heard of the match and immediately hunted up Joe Coffey to get in on the killing. "Who's going to win this match?" Smiley asked Joe.

"I don't know," Joe answered. "How are you betting your money?" Corbett inquired.

"On Cutler," Coffey replied. "That's good enough for me," Smiley answered and walked away.

Coffey Wants a Car.

According to Coffey, Corbett wagered a neat sum on the match and even wired money to friends in Omaha to place for him. In the meantime Coffey had wagered enough to purchase an automobile and, according to his own statement, had the machine bought days before the contest.

The Chicago delegation headed by Coffey arrived in Omaha a few days before the contest. They made a canvass of the city and covered all the money in sight. They had been told that Stecher was only a farmer boy and could not beat a man of Cutler's calibre and experience.

After arriving on the battle ground, Coffey and his friends, including Strangler Lewis, blew into town. Lewis lost no time in getting all the money he had down on the match and wound up by having a diamond ring and a watch. The other Chicagoans wired home for more money when they discovered as they thought—the soft pickings.

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After the men had been in the ring less than five minutes Cutler picked up Stecher and threw him over his head, hoping to stun him. The big corn husker merely put out his big hand to break the fall and was on his feet in an instant. That seemed to take the heart out of Cutler.

Gotch, who had bet on Cutler, was one of the first to realize that Stecher would be beaten, and immediately started to hedge. He got some money placed by wagering 3 to 1 on Stecher, and the Chicagoans were a downhearted, broken crowd.

Morningside A. C. Road Run.

Edward Waldron Trophy to Be Competed For. The annual 6 1/4 mile hand-pole road race of the Morningside Athletic Club, known as the Edward Waldron annual classic will be held from the Central Casino, 154th street and Eighth avenue on Sunday afternoon, May 4. From the advance request for entry blanks it is expected that a field close to 250 runners will compete for the many prizes hung up by the club for this event.

Twenty-five prizes besides the handsome team trophy will be awarded to the athletes. The first five runners to finish will be given cups. The winners' cup will be the Edward Waldron Trophy, silver and stands 18 inches high. Three novice prizes also will be awarded. Entries will close April 29 with Athletic committee at Morningside A. C., 31 West 123rd street.

F. AND M. FOOTBALL CARD.

Sport to Be Resumed on Pre-war Basis. LANCASTER, April 5.—The announcement of a football schedule by Manager Paul Schaffer removes all doubt as to whether Franklin and Marshall College is to resume athletics on a pre-war basis. The usual list of colleges has been hooked and the schedule is as follows:

October 4, Delaware College at Newark, Del.; October 11, Albright College at Lancaster; October 18, Pennsylvania Military at Chester; October 25, Dickinson College at Lancaster; November 1, Haverford College at Haverford; November 8, Swarthmore College at Lancaster; November 15, Bryn Mawr College at Lancaster; Thanksgiving Day, Gettysburg College at Lancaster.

Boston College Dates.

Boston, April 5.—The Boston College baseball schedule, announced to-day calls for twenty-seven games, with three more pending. The dates include the following, games being at home unless otherwise indicated:

April 5, West Point at West Point; 11, Fordham at New York; 15, Camp Merritt at Fort Monmouth; 18, Green College at Brooklyn; 22, Villa Nova at Philadelphia; 25, Rhode Island State at Providence; May 2, Fordham at New York; 5, Trinity at New York; 11, Springfield at Springfield; 15, Connecticut State at New Britain; 21, Middlebury at Middlebury; 25, Holy Cross at Worcester.